

Reflection for the Feast of the Lateran Basilica

The most important temple is the temple of a person's soul because God dwells within each one of us. In the most secret center of our being is that sacred sanctuary where we meet God. From: My Catholic Life

This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, in Rome, Italy. This Feast is always celebrated on November the ninth every year. Recently when I was speaking with a parishioner, she stated 5,831. I then asked her why the number 5,831, and she answered that is the distance between Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Los Alamos, New Mexico and the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome, Italy. We then spoke about why 5,831 miles away from the Basilica of St. John Lateran we are celebrating the dedication for this Basilica. The explanation of why we as a universal Church celebrate the dedication of the Lateran Basilica on November the 9th is an explanation that spans 1,400 years. At this point you might be thinking to yourself, boy I better sit down and get comfortable this is going to take some time. Well hopefully the explanation will not be too long but worth the time.

The roots of the Solemnity we celebrate this Sunday dates to 313 when Emperor Constantine gifted the Lateran Palace to the Catholic Church. It was in 318 or 324 that Pope Sylvester I dedicated the Church that Constantine had built near the Lateran Palace to the Most Holy Savior. In the tenth century a chapel was built inside the Church that is used as a baptistry it was dedicated to St. John the Baptist by Pope Sergius III. Later in the 12th Century Pope Lucius II also dedicated the Basilica to St. John the Evangelist. Thus, the name of this Papal Basilica is the Basilica of the Most Holy Savior and of Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist in the Lateran. This Basilica is the Cathedral of Rome, the see of the Diocese of Rome. This Church is considered the Mother Church of all Churches in the world. The Basilica was destroyed several times over the centuries and always rebuilt. The final reconstruction took place during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XIII; the Church was rededicated in the year 1724. It was at this time that the feast celebrated today was established and extended to the Universal Church.

In our Gospel Reading this Sunday we hear of Jesus entering the Temple and throwing out the money changers and merchants. So often this Gospel is used to justify anger or used to challenge the idea that anger is ok. It is important to note that the Solemnity of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica always has the same Gospel Reading of Jesus in the Temple reminding all present that this is His Father's house. Also, it is in our Gospel Reading this Sunday we hear of Jesus stating, *"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."* This information might enable us to see a different message and purpose of our Gospel Reading this Sunday that is spelled out in our Second Reading this Sunday taken from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians in which is stated, *"Brothers and Sisters: You are God's building."* Every time we gather for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we can come forward and receive Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. At Baptism, through the Baptismal Waters we are born again in Christ, becoming a member of the Mystical Body of Christ. When God created the world, He gave the breath of life to Adam the first man.

Yes, it is crystal clear that as is stated in the article from *My Catholic Life*, about the Solemnity of the Basilica of St. Johns Lateran, that the most important temple is that of a person's soul, for it is there that God dwells within each one of us. This Feast of the dedication of the Basilica of St. Johns Lateran reminds us of the importance of Churches, and in particular the Lateran Basilica which is considered the Mother Church of all the Churches in the world. All Church buildings provide that sacred space to connect with God. In our Gospel reading this Sunday we hear of Jesus mentioning that the Temple is His Father's home, but he goes on to mention that He will rise from the dead on the third day. In our Gospel Reading this Sunday Jesus moves from a Temple made of stone to one that is made of flesh and blood. May we recognize Christ dwelling within us and may we recognize the presence of Christ in each other. May this recognition affect how we treat ourselves and others.